Surára
Pakidai

/15/

342 184 As a third house-form, on the Cachoeira dos Índios on the upper Araçá I became acquainted with a closed, circular maloka ten meters high with a gable roof. The Surára told me that this type of construction is customary among the Xiriâna. Up to now, however, there has been no description of it.

361 313 The construction, as in the case of the open maloka, is carried out by all the men of the tribe, under the direction of the chief, as communal work. I had the good fortune to be present at this construction in all its phases. First, a section of the forest, upon which the maloka is to be erected, is cleared. The men start by cutting down the small trees and bushes and pulling out the roots. Then they proceed to fell the large trees. Before two men with their axes set to work on a tree, however, one man climbs it and fastens a very long liana just under the crown. When the tree is then notched so far that it threatens to fall, three or four men pull it down to the ground by means of the liana and, as the tree falls, quickly leap to one side. When all the trees are cut, the roots are dug out with the help of the terçados (large bush-knives) and the hands. Meanwhile other men pull out the underbrush on the ground. During the next two or three days, trees are cut in the virgin forest to serve as building material. After that the chief, assisted by two or three men, 342 marks off a circular area by means of a liana. Then the building starts, and, after only eight days, presents the following completed construction: On either side of three center posts ten meters high, which constitute the ridge, four posts eight meters high stand in a semicircle. At a greater distance from these posts 21 small stakes, each five meters high, are driven into the ground in a semicircle around the posts mentioned. The tall posts, as well as the medium-sized and small ones, are joined by means of two cross-strips at the upper ends and two meters below this. Moreover, numerous horizontal rods are fastened to the cross-strips of the 21 outer posts, by means of which the house wall is formed. Sixty-nine horizontal poles, which are supposed to support the frame of the roof, run from the upper cross-strips of the small posts, over those of the middle posts, which serve as supports, to those of the

Surára
Pakidái

/79 cont./

222 which can be obtained easily and without danger, for the bees are stingless. Usually they have their nests in hollow trees or in the ground. Occasionally, however, one also sees nests built in tall trees; the latter are then cut down by the men, for the purpose of obtaining the honey. The honey is scooped out of the nest with the hand or with a calabash and put into a folded palm leaf which is then tied together and taken along to the maloka. -- Birds' eggs also constitute a popular addition to the diet, as does the nourishing yolk of the eggs of water turtles; the egg white, on the other hand, is discarded because it has an unpleasant, fish-oil taste. During the dry season, especially during the months December-February, the Surára and Pakidái gather these turtle eggs in great numbers on the sandbanks of the Demini and Aracá. -- [226] Also to be mentioned are crayfish and crabs, which are pulled out of the holes in the mud of the riverbanks. -- I also observed that they eat certain kinds of frogs and spiders, as well as insect larvae, caterpillars, termites, and the hind parts of the leaf-cutter ant (Atta sp.) -- aneanemá.

241 e) Agriculture

Although agriculture among the Surára and Pakidái was introduced only a comparatively short time ago, they have already developed a remarkable system with regard to the laying out of their fields. These are always laid out circularly around the maloka. The procedure is such that, first of all, at the beginning of a dry season, October-November, a rather large piece of forest is cleared, during which it is seen to that the circular shape is produced. To chop down the underbrush and the lianas, the [313] [412] men use the tercados (large bush-knives), and the trees are felled with steel axes (367). After about two months, when the felled

[439] 367. The Surára obtain these articles of civilization from the palm-fiber gatherers by barter, and the Pakidái get them from the Indian protection post Ajuricaba on the middle Demini.

/444 cont./

241 The land is cleared by first pulling out all the small plants and stems; then the trees which reach a trunk diameter of around 25 centimeters are cut with a machete, and finally the large trees are cut down with an axe.

• [313] Sometimes they climb the tree and attach a liana to it so as to be able to pull it to direct its fall.

After the trees have had sufficient time to dry out on the ground, they cut off the branches and pile them up with the underbrush in order finally to burn them. Owing to the abundance of rainfall, it is impossible for them to wait for a dry period. I have seen them burn the weeds in their conuco after it had rained heavily the night before. Sometimes they must bring dry firewood in order to make the damp weeds burn.

[412] [178] An old woman told me one day: "These people of today have it easy. We did not have machetes and axes in former times. Fire was our principal tool. /445/ We had to carry a lot of firewood to pile up around the trees in order to bring them down by fire."

412 174 [192] There is an indication in their language that at one time they used stone axes before being able to acquire metal axes and machetes. They use the same word, "boo," to designate both the machete and a certain stone which they use for grinding the "yopo" powder. This stone has the proper form for making an ax out of it, if a handle were attached to it. Nevertheless, the relationship between these objects, if there was one at one time, is unknown to the present generation of El Platanal.

241 412 A bow without a string or a similar stick is the principal instrument which they use for planting. They use it both to loosen the small banana stems for replanting and to open holes in the ground for holding practically any kind of seed.

249 Tobacco is planted first in a garden bed and then transplanted. The small plants are protected from the sun for a few days by means of platano leaves put on a covering for shade.

241 Sometimes a few stakes are fixed in the ground to indicate plantings near the paths, thus keeping the seeds or young plants from being stepped on.

/449/

Preparation of Food

251 To keep meat from spoiling, it is first dried directly over the fire. Then it is kept on a rack over the fire, perhaps for several hours, but frequently all night. After this, it is placed a bit farther from the fire, but where the air will keep it dry, although not necessarily warm. I have seen meat kept for some ten days in this way, and doubtless it would have lasted longer had it not been eaten.

252 Meat preserved in this way is still regarded as raw and must be cooked in a pot before being eaten.

Small animals are cleaned, washed, and then boiled whole in a pot. If the animal is large, it is cut up into pieces small [194] enough to fit into the pot. The custom of leaving the skin and hair on them while they cook is perhaps a survival from the time when they did not have knives for skinning them. A string or piece of bark is tied to each piece of meat in order to be able to take it out of the pot to turn it. From time to time they take the meat out in order to prick it many times with a stick so that it will cook more quickly.

When it is finally ready, the head of the family, or the owner of the meat, shares it or divides it into portions which he distributes among his relatives or friendly families.

462 252 The task of cooking the meat is man's work. He is the owner of the pot, does the hunting, looks for the firewood, and divides and distributes the cooked meat. (Sometimes he sends a boy to deliver the meat to some family on the other side of the circle of dwellings.)

313 462 [412] The gathering of firewood for cooking food other than meat and for keeping the family warm at night is woman's work. For this reason the women use the ax much more than the men do.

252 Green platanos are generally peeled and placed directly over the embers, turned a few times, and /450/ taken off when they are found ready to eat. Or they may be placed on a live fire to be cooked, but without being peeled, in order that they may not be blackened. If it is necessary to cook a large quantity of green platanos quickly, they are peeled and boiled in a pot.

/467 cont./

Division of Labor

462 The men clear the "conucos," plant them, and weed them.
[241] The women carry most of the harvests to their /468/ houses in
[482] their carrying baskets. The men sometimes help carry the harvests when there is more than the women can carry, or when the men go to the "conuco" alone.

[224] The men do the hunting and carry the game back to the house. They may call upon the women to help them when the game has been brought into the vicinity.

[226] The men fish with bow and arrow, hooks, and poison. The women fish with macanas and with baskets.

[499] The men build the bridges.

[342] The men build the structure or framework of the houses and help build the roofs. The women collect the leaves for covering the roof and help to roof.

[313] The women cut most of the firewood and carry it to the
[482] settlement. They cut it on the site and carry it to their houses in the carrying baskets, ready to be used. The men carry to the house the sticks for roasting meat, and, if they need to be cut into pieces, they do it once they have arrived.

[252] The women in general cook breakfast for the entire family. For the other meals, each person generally cooks his own platanos. The women bake the "casabe" /cassava bread/. The men cook everything which has to be boiled in the clay pots, such as the meat of the game which they have taken and the fruit of the "pijiguao" palm.

[482] When the settlement moves, the women carry almost all the belongings of the family and as much food as possible in their carrying baskets, which they hang from their heads by straps or bands. The men carry their bows, the clay pots, and any food that the women cannot carry. The men use straps or bands hanging from their shoulders or their heads, but not baskets.

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4 feet off the ground at the rear and 6 feet off the ground at the front. Shorter sticks are then laid crossways on the major roof poles and these, in turn, covered with several layers of long, broad, wild "banana" leaves (see Glossary, under "Banana, wild"). It is quite small, but can sleep three individuals. Frequently, the traveler finds the remains of one of these houses and has merely to put a new layer of leaves on the roof to make it waterproof; occasionally, he takes a chance that it won't rain that night and does not improve the hut at all.

When the Yąnomamö settle a new area, they erect temporary villages of these crude huts and live in them until they can build a *shabono*. They also live in huts like these while they are re-roofing the old *shabono*.

The permanent village is complete when the palisade of logs is erected around its circumference. This is placed some 3 or 4 feet behind the roof, allowing space for a path around the village inside the palisade. The palisade itself is about 10 feet high and usually made of a mixture of palm and hardwood logs. It is kept in repair only when there is some reason to suspect raiders. Otherwise, people pilfer logs from it for use as firewood. The entrance to the village, as well as the palisade entrance, is covered with brush and logs at night to keep out intruders. Anyone trying to enter will inevitably make the brush move and alarm the village dogs.

FOOD AND ITS GATHERING The jungle provides numerous varieties of food, both animal and vegetable. The most commonly taken game includes several species of monkeys, two varieties of wild "turkey," two species of wild pig, armadillos, anteaters, tapir, deer, a small alligator, small rodents, and several species of smaller birds. Wild vegetable foods commonly exploited by the Yąnomamö are: palm fruits of several species, hardwood fruits, brazil nuts, tubers, and the seed pods of the feral banana. Of these, the palm fruits are by far the most significant.

These occur seasonally and, for brief periods of time, produce large quantities of fruits. Unfortunately, there is very little edible substance in each fruit, so that in order to get filled, one must eat the edible portion of enormous quantities of fruit. The Yąnomamö extensively exploit two closely related palms, *pei* and *karashi*. The *pei* fruits are about the size of small hen's eggs and occur in large clusters, weighing 80 pounds and more, near the tops of the palm trees. The *karashi* fruits are about half that size. The exterior portion of the fruit is a leathery shell which is peeled with the teeth. Inside there is a thin layer of very bitter, white flesh. This is chewed and sucked off. The taste resembles that of a poor grade of bath soap. Of the two, I found *karashi* the more repugnant. My throat burned when I ate them.

Another commonly exploited palm is the *aliwashi*. It is tangerine red in color and covered with a leather-like skin that consists of hundreds of small scales. They are about the size of large hen's eggs and resemble small hand grenades. When the fruit is dry, as, for example, when it is first cut from the tree, it is almost impossible to get the leathery scales off. The Yąnomamö overcome this difficulty by throwing the fruit bunches into water and letting them soak for several days, after which the scales can be easily scraped off with the fingernails, exposing a thin layer of yellowish, soft flesh that tastes very much like cheese. The fruits begin to ferment after they have soaked, producing a slightly pungent taste. I enjoyed eating *aliwashi* with the Yąnomamö; the fruit was good, and the technique of eating it was very sociable. We would wade into the swamp where the fruit had been submerged and grope around in the murky water to locate it. After

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removed and laid along the ground in the direction of the burrow to measure the distance from the entrance. The men began digging at the end of the vine and located the asphyxiated armadillo on the first attempt.

The jungle provides many other kinds of foods and products too numerous to mention. Some, like vines and lianas, are very useful and commonly employed in basket-making; others, such as edible mushrooms, crabs, pigments, and decorative plant products, are less significant, and exploited only sporadically. Despite the amazing variety of food products to be found in the jungle, however, the Yąnomamö could not exist for any substantial period of time on collected foods only: they rely heavily on their cultivated crops. The tropical forest is much less productive and reliable than one would imagine. The most abundant foods, palm fruits, are seasonal—a group of people could only rely on them for a few months of the year, during which time some 80 group members would have to forage over a wide area to obtain sufficient palm fruits to keep everybody well fed.

Game animals are not abundant, and an area is rapidly hunted out, so that a group must keep constantly on the move. Furthermore, hunting depends as much on luck as it does on skill and is not a very reliable way to supply nourishment. I have gone on five-day hunting trips with the Yąnomamö in areas that had not been hunted for decades, and had we not brought cultivated foods along, we would have been extremely hungry at the end of this time—we did not collect even enough meat to feed ourselves. On other trips, we often managed to collect enough game in one day to feed the entire village.

GARDENING Although the Yąnomamö spend almost as much time hunting as they do gardening, the bulk of their diet comes from foods that are cultivated. Perhaps 85 percent or more of the diet consists of domesticated rather than wild foods—plantains are by far the most important food in the diet.

The Yąnomamö are constantly looking for potential garden sites. When I hunted with them, the topic of conversation that evening would eventually drift over to the merits of the area as a possible site for a new garden. Most new garden sites are, in fact, discovered by hunters.

The land for a new site should not be heavily covered with brush, which is difficult to remove. The larger trees should not be too numerous either, as it takes a good deal of work to chop them down. Ideally, the new site should have very light jungle cover, should be well drained, near a source of drinking water, and relatively free of thorny underbrush. The Yąnomamö call a garden *hikari täka;* jungle that has the potential of being a good garden is likewise called *hikari täka.*

The first operation in making a new garden is to cut the smaller trees and brush; the bigger trees, *kayaba hi,* are left standing until the underbrush is removed. Then the big trees are felled with axes and left lying on the ground to dry out in the sun.

My older informants claimed that they did not have steel tools when they were younger and had to kill the big trees by cutting a ring of bark off around the base of the stump, using a crude stone axe, piling brush around them, and burning them. The trees rarely fell, but the fire usually killed them, and their leaves dropped off, permitting the sunlight to reach the ground.

They also claimed that making a garden was more arduous in those days because a large area would have to be searched for the necessary quantities of kindling used to kill the big trees. Today, however, steel tools are quite common, being provided by the

Today, however, steel tools are quite common, being provided by the several missionaries who have recently located posts at a number of locations in Yąnomamö territory. The tools that they give to their local people are eventually traded inland to more remote villages so that all the Yąnomamö, even those who have not yet had any direct contact with outsiders, now have steel tools.[7] Before the missionaries arrived, the Yąnomamö occasionally obtained steel tools from the Carib-speaking Makiritare Indians, who have long been in contact with civilization. Some of the Makiritare made periodic canoe trips in the last century as far east as Georgetown in order to obtain these tools. Kąobawä told me that when he was a young man, his village had a single piece of steel, a portion of a broken machete that came ultimately from the Makiritare Indians by way of several intermediate Yąnomamö villages. Everybody in the village used this tool when they made their gardens. It was hafted on a split stick and used as an axe. I have seen broken machetes used in this fashion in the more remote, steel-poor villages.

The Yąnomamö usually fell the big trees toward the end of the wet season, although I have seen them do it at all times of the year. In general, the clearing of the land tends to be an activity of the wet season while the burning is done during the dry season, but this schedule is by no means rigorous. An adequate burning can be achieved at the peak of the rainy season, provided that there are two days of sunshine in succession. The dead brush and the leaves of the large trees dry out rather quickly in the sun, provided that they have been lying on the ground for a sufficiently long period of time. The trunks of the large trees are never burned, so that a newly cleared garden is strewn with logs lying helter-skelter all over the cleared patch. These serve as boundaries between individual gardens, as the crops belong to the person who plants them.

Each man clears his own land. Brothers will usually clear adjacent portions of land and, if their father is still living, his garden will be among theirs. The headman of the village generally has the largest garden, as he must produce larger quantities of food; he is obliged to give food away at feasts. He can frequently enlist the aid of other men to help him make a large garden. Kąobawä, for example, is helped by a younger brother, a brother-in-law, and the latter's son. Once in a while one of his sisters who lives in a different village visits for a long stretch of time, and her son-in-law also helps Kąobawä work in the garden during these visits.

After the brush has dried out and the larger trees felled, the portable timber and brush is gathered up into piles and burned, each man having several fires going in his own patch, to which he hauls the brush as he gathers it up. Usually, the fires are built under or next to one of the larger logs. In this way the logs dry out even more completely and can be easily chopped up by the women for firewood. The ashes are not scattered to improve soil fertility.

If the new site is a great distance from the previous garden, the men will have to make numerous trips between the two sites in order to transport the plantain cuttings. If an ally's village is closer to the new garden site, some cuttings can be borrowed from his gardens, thereby reducing the transportation labor. Each mature plantain or banana plant sends out suckers which sprout a few feet away from the adult stalk. When the Yąnomamö cut the bunch of plantains or bananas from the producing plant, they also cut the entire plant down to permit the younger suckers to receive the sunlight. The larger

[7] One missionary told me that he has given the residents of his village approximately 3000 machetes over the past eight years! These are traded inland to more remote Yąnomamö.

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of other villages—such alliances are stabilized by exchanges of women between the partners, a breach of the prescriptive marriage rules. It is for this reason that such a large discrepancy exists between the ideal behavior and the actual practice, as noted in Table 2.[18]

Division of Labor and Daily Social Life

The daily activities and general social life are not as circumscribed by rules and regulations as would appear from the foregoing discussion. In fact, one first has the impression that chaos rather than order reigns over the daily activities of the village members![19] Thus, while ideal rules about behavior definitely exist, individuals have a great deal of freedom to manipulate their behavior in such a way that they are not unduly encumbered by them. Most of the run-of-the-mill activities of daily life are not characterized by inflexible prescriptions regarding proper behavior.

MALE-FEMALE DIVISION There are a number of distinctions based on status differences that are important in daily life. Perhaps the most conspicuous and most important is the distinction between males and females.

Yąnomamö society is decidedly masculine. As was discussed earlier, there is a definite preference to have male children, resulting in a higher incidence of female infanticide as opposed to male infanticide. Female children assume duties and responsibilities in the household long before their brothers are obliged to participate in useful domestic tasks. For the most part, little girls are obliged to tend their younger brothers and sisters, although they are also expected to help their mothers in other chores such as cooking, hauling water, and collecting firewood. By the time girls have reached puberty they have already learned that their world is decidedly less attractive than that of their brothers.

As members of local descent groups, girls have almost no voice in the decisions reached by their agnates concerning their marriage. They are largely pawns to be disposed of by their kinsmen, and their wishes are given very little consideration. In many cases, the girl has been promised to a man long before she reaches puberty, and in some cases her husband actually raises her for part of her childhood. In short, they do not participate as equals in the political affairs of the corporate kinship group and seem to inherit most of the duties without enjoying many of the privileges.

Marriage does not enhance the status of the girl, for her duties as wife require her to assume difficult and laborious tasks too menial to be executed by the men. For the most part these include the incessant demands for firewood and drinking water, particularly the former. Women spend several hours each day scouring the neighborhood

[19]Reducing kinship usage to the logical extremes to which the Yąnomamö take it, there really is no discrepancy between theory and practice, except in the case of incest. When new villages enter into contact for the first time their respective headmen call each other *shoriwä* (brother-in-law). The first exchanges between the groups usually involve the children of these men. The children, of course, stand in marriageable relationship to each other because the children of brothers-in-law can, by the prescriptive definitions, marry.

[19]Many fieldworkers do not begin to see the patterns of behavior until they have spent months of intensive contact with their subjects. I was convinced, after five or six months, that there were almost no guidelines for behavior. A part of the difficulty resulted from the language barrier. The patterns began to emerge only after about six months, and only then could I begin asking pertinent questions about many features of social organization.

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Fig. 3-6. Women hauling firewood from the jungle to the village at dusk.

for suitable wood. There is usually an abundant supply in the garden within a year of the clearing of the land, but this disappears rapidly. Thereafter, the women must forage further afield to collect the daily supply of firewood, sometimes traveling several miles each day to obtain it. It is a lucky woman who owns an axe, for collecting wood is a tedious job without a steel tool. The women can always be seen at dusk, returning to the village in a procession, bearing enormous loads of wood in their pack-baskets (see Fig. 3-6). Good planners will spend a great deal of time collecting wood on some days so that they can take a vacation from this chore on others. If a woman locates a good supply of wood near the village, she will haul as much as she can and store it rather than let it be taken by her covillagers.

462 313 [482]

Women must respond quickly to the demands of their husbands. In fact, they must respond without waiting for a command. It is interesting to watch the behavior of women when their husbands return from a hunting trip or a visit. The men march slowly across the village and retire silently to their hammocks. The woman, no matter what she is doing, hurries home and quietly but rapidly prepares a meal for the husband. Should the wife be slow in doing this, the husband is within his rights to beat her. Most reprimands meted out by irate husbands take the form of blows with the hand or with a piece of firewood, but a good many husbands are even more brutal. Some of them chop their wives with the sharp edge of a machete or axe, or shoot them with a barbed arrow in some nonvital area, such as the buttocks or leg. Many men are given over to punishing their wives by holding the hot end of a glowing stick against them, resulting in serious burns. The punishment is usually, however, adjusted to the seriousness of the wife's shortcomings, more drastic measures being reserved for infidelity or suspicion of infidelity.

593 462 [252] 593 164 [537]

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drugs take effect. This usually lasts for an hour or so, after which the men bathe to wash the vomit or nasal mucus off their bodies. Kaobawä does not participate in the drug-taking, as he finds it unpleasant. Most of the men, however, do take drugs and enjoy doing it, despite the associated unpleasantries of vomiting and the pain that follows the blast of air as the powder is blown deeply into the nasal passages.

Whatever the men do for the afternoon, however, the women invariably search for firewood and haul immense, heavy loads of it to their houses just before dark.

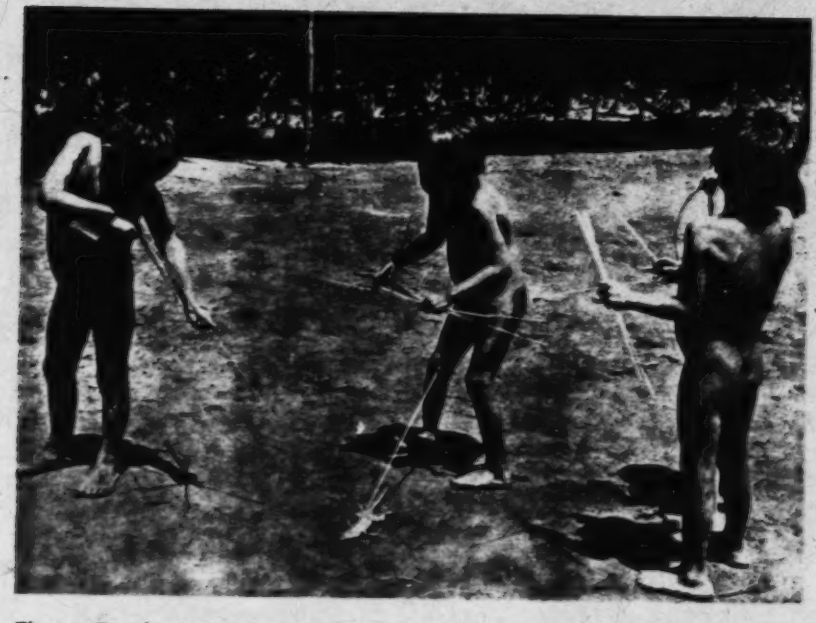

Fig. 3–8. Boys shooting tiny arrows into a lizard they have captured. The lizard is tied to a string and allowed to run around the village while the boys gleefully chase it. Here they have wounded it and are about to fill it full of arrows.

The biggest meal of the day is prepared in the evening. The staple is plantains, but frequently other kinds of food are available after the day's activities. Meat is always the most desirable food and is always considered to be in short supply. It is a happy occasion when one of the hunters bags a tapir, for everyone gets a large share of it.

It is good to share meat with others. This attitude is expressed in the sentiment that a hunter should give away most of the game he kills. One of the obligations men take very seriously is providing adequate quantities of meat for their wives and children. They genuinely abhor hearing their children cry for meat; this calls into question their abilities as hunters and marksmen, both of which are associated with prestige. Rerebawä, for example, collected a large supply of game on one trip we took together. He gave it all to his wife and children and to his wife's parents. At the evening meal he refused to